



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Classes

Adult Programming: Three hundred eighty seven adults attended the 6-class series presented by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) educators. Classes were held in several locations around Yellowstone County. Participants learned to stretch their food dollars and food baskets, to plan and prepare meals based on the USDA MyPlate Guidelines for Americans, and to make healthy food choices.

Clients enthusiastically returned each week for the information, recipes and friendship. Participants shared ideas and encouraged each other in preparing healthy meals and snacks for their families. As a result of family members taking the classes, 1209 people were impacted by the information given. Of the 434 children in the participating families, 40% were five years old and under, while 43% were in grade school.

EFNEP continued partnerships to provide additional services to limited resource families through:

- **Slow Cooker Classes** – With the support of the Montana Beef Council, the Yellowstone County Cattlewomen, Farm Credit Services, and the Billings Heights Wal-Mart, this program provided a roast, vegetables, and a slow cooker to all graduates of EFNEP. Families are taught that food can be prepared ahead of time and ready when the family arrives home. They also learn that less tender cuts of meat can be tasty as well as economical.
- **Grocery Store Tours** – Attendees put into practice the skills learned in classes, through a partnership with Share Our Strength/Cooking Matters/No Kid Hungry campaigns, by going to a grocery store with the educator and touring all areas of the store looking at best buys, best practices, and food “traps.” After the tour, participants go back through the store and find items to purchase in each of the MyPlate food groups while keeping the costs under \$10 for their family. The group returns to discuss choices made, the participant receives a \$10 gift card from the store and purchases are completed.

Youth Programming: Over 980 children in grades first, third and fifth throughout Yellowstone County were taught nutrition information in a series of 6-classes. In addition to the material taught in the classroom, teachers were encouraged to follow up the goals presented each week.

Follow up materials including books to read or science experiments to conduct were provided to the classroom weekly. Newsletters were sent home each week with the student to involve the parents in discussions on related topics.



The amount of knowledge retained by students from first grade to third grade and then on to fifth grade, surprised presenters and classroom teachers alike. Students eagerly welcomed the nutrition educators and willingly shared knowledge they learned on their own. These programs are increasing awareness of healthy choices and healthy living!

Nutrition Education and Summer Feeding Program in the Parks

For six weeks this summer a nutrition educator with MSU Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and volunteers taught nutrition and physical activity lessons to youth participating in the free lunch provided by School District 2. The three park sites chosen were located near Title 1 schools where EFNEP teaches a series of nutrition classes throughout the school year. Central, South and Arrowhead Parks were targeted. Participation was open to any and all children at each site. A total of 131 children pre-K through sixth grade completed the series of classes. At the first and last lessons a behavioral survey to determine nutrition and physical activity practices of each participant was taken. As a result of the survey it was determined that participants changed

Extension Focuses on Our Youth

food safety practices by washing fruits and vegetables before eating. Children also tried to eat more fruits and vegetables and wash hands before eating or handling food. Students were given a jump rope to encourage physical activity. After the last lesson children were presented a cookbook containing nutritious, easy to prepare snacks.

Supporting Native American Youth of Military Families

In 2010, there were 153,223 Native American military veterans across the United States. Native American soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen have fought heroically in all of this country's wars and armed conflicts. Historically, Native Americans have the highest rate of service in the military per capita in comparison to any other ethnic group. Montana has 11 Native American tribes living on seven reservations. Together they make up about six percent of Montana's population.

Last year, the Montana Operation Military Kids support network in Yellowstone County provided programs to youth of Native American military families in Eastern Montana. Collaborating with the MSU Extension 4-H/Youth programs and public schools on two Montana Reservations, we delivered recreational, educational and social events to over 120 Native American youth who were impacted by deployment.

Because of cultural traditions, Native students viewpoints can differ from the rest of the nation's population. These students are 237% more likely to drop out of school and 207% more likely to be expelled from school than Caucasian students. An ongoing goal of 4-H & Operation Military Kids is to help Native American children develop everyday life skills that will support positive transition into adulthood, such as: decision making, communication, leadership, responsibility and making healthy lifestyle choices. These life skills are taught through hands-on activities, camps and workshops.

While Native American service men and women of Montana continue to step up and fight for our freedom, their families need our support. Yellowstone County Extension is committed to continuing their work with local support networks that focus on youth in our Reservation communities. By providing research-base programming and a safe, nurturing environment for military-connected youth, 4-H enhances resilience. Through their land grant mission of serving the citizens in their local communities, Extension reaches out to its military families to invite them



Native American youth participate in Robotics and Aerospace workshops. Youth learn Science, Engineering and Technology (S.E.T.) skills, one of three National 4-H mission mandates.

to participate in all 4-H has to offer. Confident that their children and families have the education, support and services that help them cope, our service members are better prepared to serve our country.

Extension Agriculture and Urban Horticulture

Cutworms and Hail Strike **Yellowstone County Ag Producers**

Yellowstone County started the 2013 growing season with army and pale western cutworms damaging large portions of rangeland grass and dryland hay. Most of the damage was in northwestern Yellowstone County. The late discovery of the unexpected infestation was first noticed when stress to the dryland hay and winter wheat crop was observed. Rangeland producers thought they were experiencing drought conditions, but later found that army and pale western cutworms were the culprits actually killing much of the grass and alfalfa. In many cases it was too late for pesticide applications. Fortunately, many of the native



Rangeland grasses killed by cutworms on a Yellowstone County ranch.

grasses seemed to survive. Ample amounts of late spring rain helped but grass reseeding will be needed on several ranches. Some ranchers saw forage losses of \$140 per cow-calf unit. The need of early range and field inspections will be the lesson learned from this loss.

Weather was also a factor for producers. Late spring rains were followed by very warm weather. Many producers suffered several hail and wind storms which greatly reduced yields. For the producers that avoided weather and pest damage, high prices for forage crops will help their bottom lines.

The Agricultural Extension Agent assisted producers by inspecting several hundred acres of damage to dryland crops. Collaboration with MSU's entomology specialist Dr. Kevin Wanner and MSU's Range Management Specialist Dr. Jeff Mosley helped provide needed information for producers. On one ranch, sorghum-sudan grass was planted and will provide ample winter forage to replace feed lost

due to cutworms. Agricultural producers are finding their local MSU Extension office to be an effective source of information for a variety of weather and pest-related problems.

First Master Gardener Association in **State Educates Women Inmates**

The Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association (YCMGA) is the first non-profit Master Gardener Association in the state. They are dedicated to expanding the outreach of the Yellowstone County Extension Office's Urban Horticulture position by teaching gardening skills in and around Yellowstone County. The organization is comprised of volunteers that are Certified Master Gardeners through the Montana State University Extension Service.

With an enthusiastic board of eight, plus the Yellowstone County Horticulture Assistant, a \$1000 grant was quickly secured to benefit the Yellowstone County Women's Prison inmates. This was the first year that Yellowstone County Master Gardeners taught the Level 1 and Level 2 Master Gardener Course to the female inmates. Inmates fulfilled the course requirement of 50 volunteer hours (horticulture focused) by working in the on-site greenhouse and outdoor raised garden beds. The gardens yielded over 2,600 pounds of vegetables which provided a fresh salad bar for 200 inmates over the summer; something the facility wasn't able to provide before. Grant money was used to provide tools and materials for their greenhouse project. Master Gardeners have been invited back to instruct additional courses.

The board has also just recently received word that a plot of land has become available at MetraPark in Billings for Master Gardener use. This will be in addition to the Square Foot Demonstration Garden already in place for community education. A greenhouse demonstration and education facility is now in the planning stages, with implementation in 2014.



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Learning

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

In Montana, and other areas around the country, there is a growing population of grandparents who are called upon to be the primary caregiver(s) to their grandchildren. Today, more than 6,600 grandparents in Montana are raising their grandchildren. Many of these grandparents live in Yellowstone County.

Grandparents raising their grandchildren in Yellowstone County are struggling with the same issues any other parent does. Grandparents raising grandchildren often face an array of issues including monitoring social media use, pop culture, and changes in kinship laws. At times, the generation gap can hinder effective communication with grandchildren.

Since its inception several years ago, the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group of Yellowstone County has been working to help meet the needs of grandparents finding themselves in this situation. The support group meets monthly at Forever Families in Billings for 1½ hours where grandparents are able to find support from others in similar situations. It is a time for sharing resources, establishing a support network and learning.

Support group meetings are facilitated by the MSU Yellowstone County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent.

Topics covered during group meetings range from a variety of educational topics aimed at helping Grandparents or “Grands”, navigate the extremely challenging role of caretaker for their grandchildren. Support group meetings in Yellowstone County have helped over 20 Grandparents Raising Grandchildren families in the past year. Many grandparents have cited the group as an essential tool to making this sometimes difficult transition from grandparent to parent much easier.



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